

PREFACE

It has been passed approximate four years after beginning of “Coastal Area-capability Enhancement in Southeast Asia” project of RIHN. Including feasibility study phase, 7 years have passed after launching this project. In the beginning period of time, many members of this project were perplexed due to uncertainty of the concept of Area-capability, because it was a new word made by this project. However, currently, many members could have concrete ideas of the Area-capability through our 7 years collaborations. And many of them have been considering the importance of the Area-capability for our future in these years.

Area-capability is a new concept for evaluation of rural development. Conventional evaluation of development stands on the aspects of ampliation of fields and/or growth of productions linking to income increases. In some cases, the enhancing participation to social activity of peasants, and health of family members were taken into account. These factors are important for rural livelihoods and the data showing the improvements of these aspects have high power to persuade donors of development plans. But, on the other hands, rural development activity targeting a single and/or several aspects holds a risk to break side effects, e.g., expansion of paddy fields derives conflicts among local people and destroys the native forests around villages. These side effects of rural developments might deteriorate some important ecosystem services. Besides, income increases could not link to healthy life directory in both rural and urban areas. Therefore, to improve quality of lives in rural area, development plan should touch multiple aspects including resource and productivity growth, human resource development, harmonization with conservation of ecosystems, community developments and participation of social activities etc., at the same time.

Area-capability focus on recent regional development activities on utilizing local characteristics, the scale and types of resources used and the nature of the activities are extremely diverse. We found that efforts which have been able to continue sustainably and expanded in scope share the following elements: **(1) A local community uses a resource unique to the region; (2) Resource users understand the importance and take care of the environment that supports the resources used, and (3) A balance is struck between using and caring for resources and the supporting environment, which is evaluated by outside entities.** We believe these shared components are essential to sustainable development, and use the term “Area-capability” (AC) to refer to the set of factors that comprise these aspects.

In high bio-cultural diversity areas, each resource is generally small and vulnerable. Therefore, if we try to keep sustainable situation of all resources, total efforts will be enormous. However,

in these areas, a person can utilize multiple resources for various purposes. If there is high area-capability, even one resource situation was deteriorated; a person can change main target resources easily and smoothly, because the resource and utilizations already exist. In other words, capability is much important than sustainability in high bio-cultural diversity areas.

RIHN Area-capability Project has conducted several trans-disciplinary activities in Thailand, Philippines and Japan, in order to development of Area-capability concept and its approaches since April 2012. This project will be terminated by the end of March 2017. During remaining period of time, we try to sophisticate Area-capability concept and its approached to be easily adopted in would wide. We hope we can shear our experiences and ideas during this international workshop. We believe the Area-capability concept can open the new door to our future, and we are just standing the scratch.

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